

Executive Summary

Final Question

How, especially during COVID, can we get more of our employees not only trained but more educated on what it means to run and support an online business?

Introduction

As technology has become more prominent, many businesses have transitioned at least a portion of their business online. This does not mean that jobs will be lost but instead shows the importance of reskilling employees. Although reskilling can be a great deal of effort, it offers a higher return on investment than hiring. Replacing an employee can cost 20-30% of an annual salary whereas reskilling can cost less than 10%.¹ Overall, companies must provide their employees with adequate training so they can effectively adapt to the new way of work.

Learning Best Practices

There are a multitude of ways for employers to train their employees on using an e-commerce site. As such, they must tailor their approach to figure out what works best for their company.

Micro-Learning: Microlearning translates information into practical action by capitalizing on workers' ability to quickly and independently learn new concepts. Delivering learning in short, efficient segments can become an opportunity to address gaps in an organization's current training and development initiatives.² Two ways a company can look to incorporate microlearning principles are to create short (five minutes or less) digital training resources or look to condense existing formal content.³

Collaboration Communities: A new approach that organizations are taking outside of the blended model or module-based training is creating a collaboration community. This is a learning environment that contains virtual classrooms, mobile wireless courseware, self-study learning guides and online discussion forums.⁴ With the wide variety of ways employees can learn, these communities are most effective because employees can tailor their learning approach as well as collaborate with others across the organization in real time to maximize knowledge sharing.

Online Education Platforms: There are many outside resources for companies to utilize in order to not have to reinvent the wheel. Platforms such as edX and Coursera provide online courses (many of which are free) from top institutions such as Harvard, Yale and Stanford on a wide range of topics. Some examples are business strategy, software design, artificial intelligence and employee engagement.⁵ Employers can either select specific courses for their employees or simply provide the site for them to choose what is most relevant.

Learning By Shifting Away From Job-Specific Tasks

Creating “Convergent” Teams: “Convergence” creates cross-functional teams from different facets of company operations. Bringing together employees from different disciplines and skills backgrounds allows an organization’s workforce to support each other through technology-driven business transitions.⁶ Collaborative diffusion of learning provides workers with opportunities to develop new skills that will allow them to be more adaptable.

Creating an Intra-organizational Talent Exchange: Deconstructing jobs into “tasks” can allow companies to form an intra-organizational talent exchange. If employers can keep track of what skills are transferable between different positions, they can allow members of their workforce in fields where work has slowed down to temporarily move into positions experiencing a surge in demand.⁷ Employees that are able to learn and gain experience in a number of roles are more resilient and better equipped to respond to workplace disruptions.

Conclusion

Reskilling initiatives alone are not enough to combat the growing skills gap that has emerged as work moves online. Current learning approaches are frequently unprepared and ill-equipped to keep pace with rapid industry shifts in talent needs. As companies become increasingly involved in e-commerce, their learning strategies need to focus on building organizational resilience. Adapting best practices to work cooperatively with new technologies allows employees to easily renew and reinvent their talents to best succeed in a dynamic and digital retail environment.⁸

References

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